

Making Progress in Challenging Times: Rowing in the same direction to end homelessness



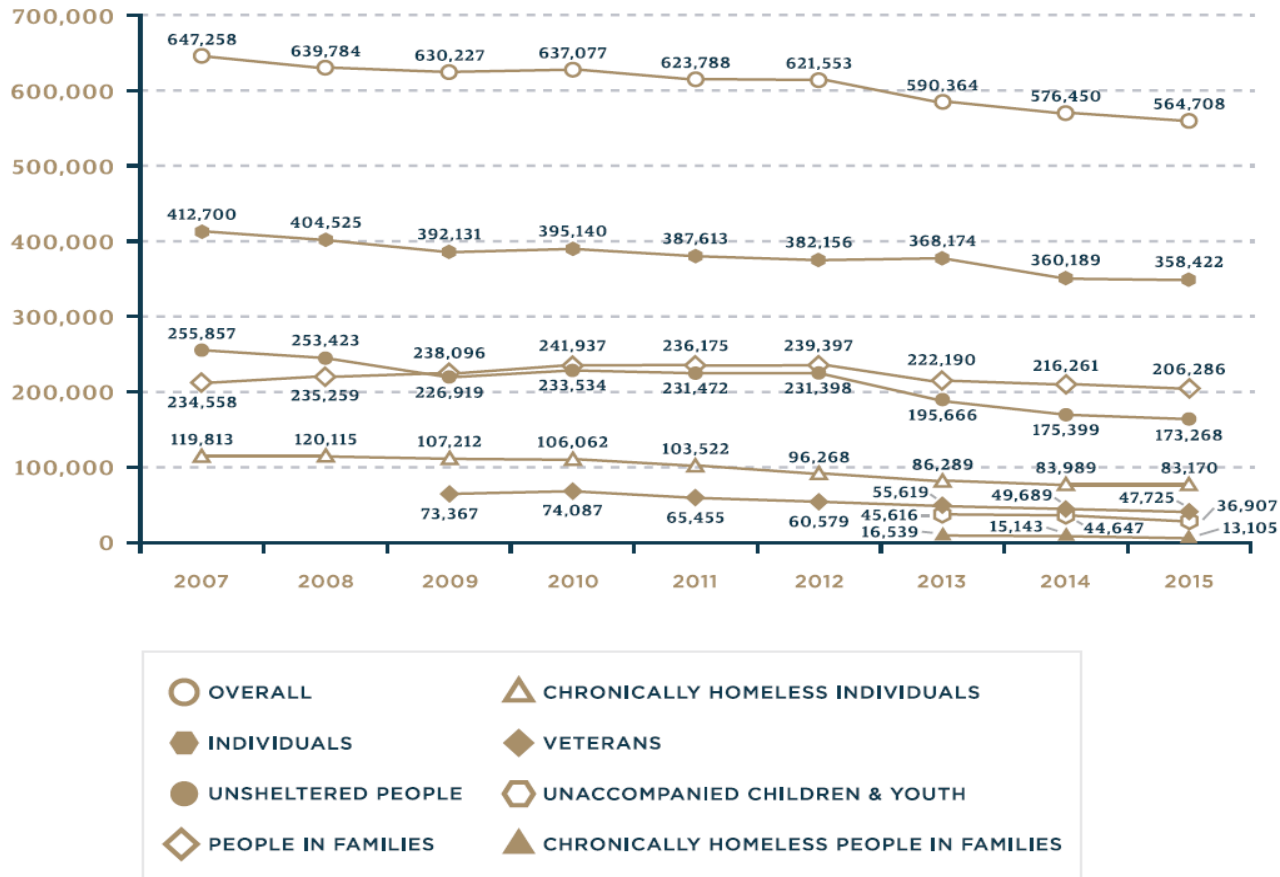
Local Government Commission
Policy Makers Dinner Forum
April 7, 2016

About Focus Strategies

- Sacramento-based consulting firm working nationally
- Founded to help communities improve use of data to reduce and end homelessness
- Presenting today: Katharine Gale, Principal Associate and former Policy Director for U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

Where are we now?

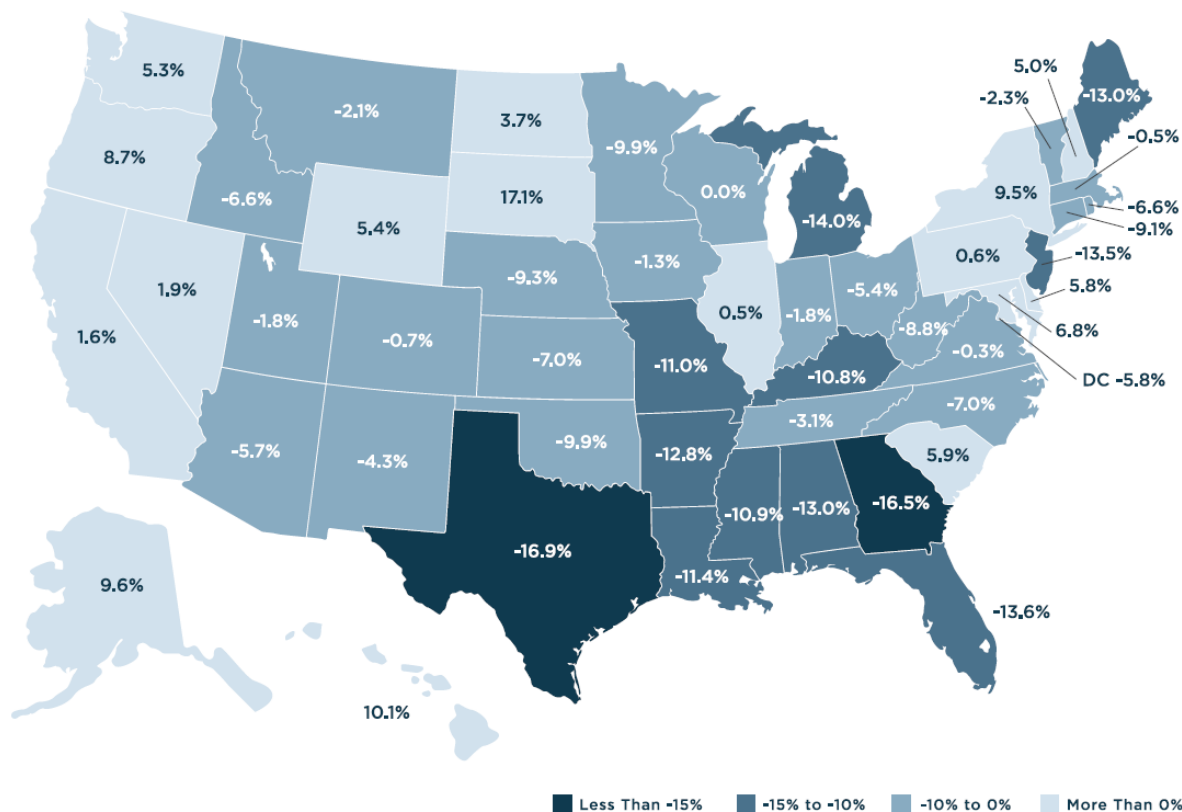
FIGURE 1.3
SUBPOPULATION TRENDS, 2007-2015



Where are we now?

MAP 1.1

CHANGE IN OVERALL HOMELESSNESS, 2014-2015



CHAPTER ONE THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

What's Working?

- Focusing on Housing First, *Housing Fast*
- Defining clear goals and resourcing those goals
- Using program models that are successful and well targeted:
 - Permanent Supportive Housing for highest need
 - Rapid Rehousing for most
 - Using affordable housing as part of solution
 - “Diverting” from entering homeless system wherever possible

What's working

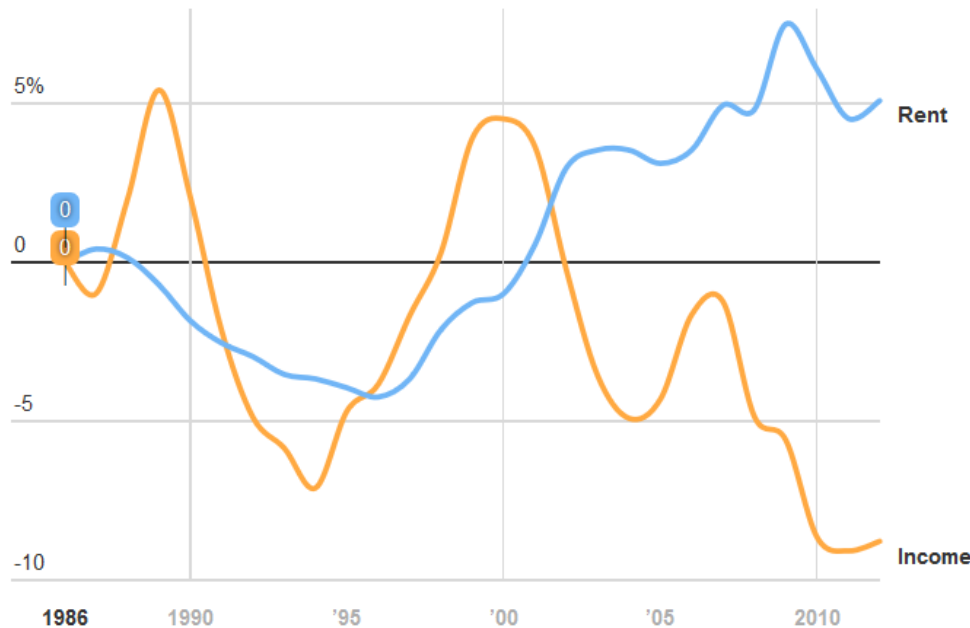
Recognizing homelessness is a condition not a characteristic: housing cures homelessness



Major Challenges

Housing crunch!! High costs and low vacancy rates present big challenges

The percent change in median renter income compared to median monthly rent since 1986.



Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Source: [Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University](#)

Challenges

- Many parties need to work together – no one entity responsible
- Difficulty separating goal of ending homelessness from other goals
- Challenges knowing what is working and what is being spent (*where's the data?*)
- Change is hard!

What about the unsheltered crisis?

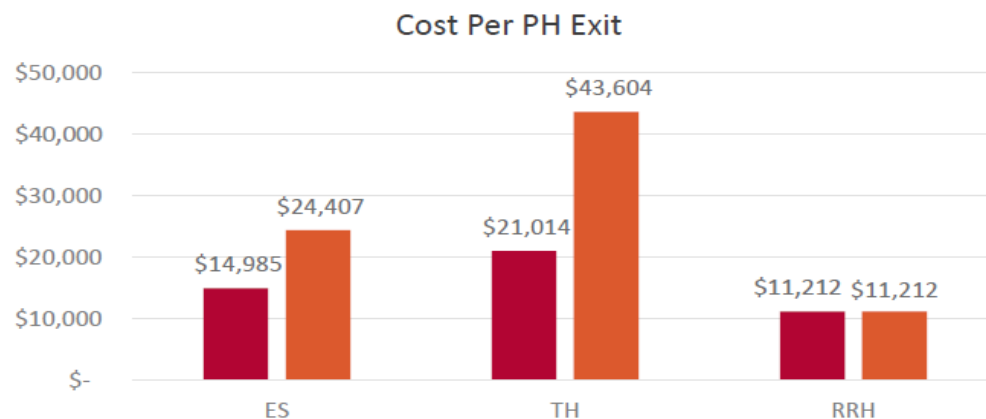
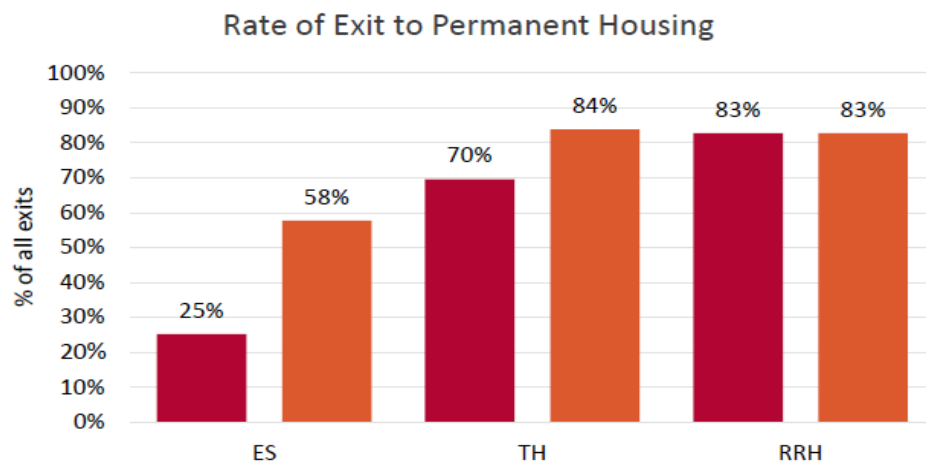
- People should be able to be safe from the elements and meet basic needs
- Shelter, campgrounds, etc. are temporary locations *to do the work from* – not a solution
- A lot can be done through strong outreach
- Efforts to locate, finance, operate temporary settings can drain focus and resources from housing solutions



Why is data so important?

- Only way to know how to target resources
- Only way to hold system and programs accountable
- Only way to know what is changing
- Bottom line: ***You need to know what you are buying and your suppliers need to know what they are selling***

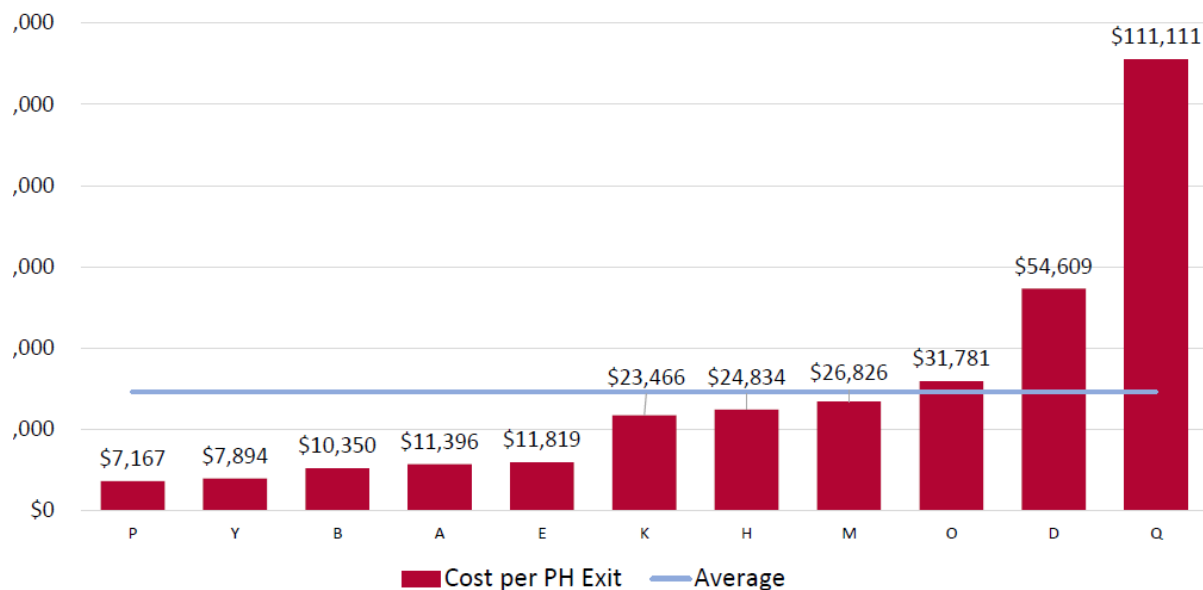
Knowing how the system performs



■ Adult HHs ■ Family HHs

Knowing how programs perform

Cost per PH Exit from Transitional Housing by Project



Ask the questions

- How many new people entered our system this year? How many got housing? How many are stuck?
- Are we reaching people on the street? Do we know who they are? How do we prioritize them?
- What kind of outcomes are we getting? (housing rates, time in programs, rates of return)
- What are we spending? What are we buying?

These are not one time questions – an ongoing process that has impact on decisions.

Rowing in the Same Direction

- Set clear goals – everyone on same page
- Commit to specific outcomes (quick response, success getting into housing, not becoming homeless again)
- Use data to measure and refine approaches
- Align and move resources



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